The Cave Image and the Problem of Place: the Sophist, the Poet, and the Philosopher

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In Book VII of Plato's *Republic*, Socrates instructs Glaucon to make an image "of our nature in its education and want of education."[1] Socrates introduces the cave image as a continuation of his speech about the "greatest study," the Idea of the Good by which all things become useful and beneficial (505a2-4).[2] Specifically, he now considers the Good and the Ideas from the perspective of παιδεία, or the education of the human soul, whereby man both makes or forms himself and is formed by that which he does not make. The most obvious feature of Socrates' speech about the cave is that it is a poetic image, in the sense that it presents us with a miniature drama in which distinct characters participate. Yet there are good reasons to believe that philosophy is not subordinated to poetry in the cave image, but rather that poetry is exalted to an important philosophic purpose. The reader will recall that Socrates begins to talk about the Good with the admonition that the greatest things deserve the greatest precision (504d9-e3). His subsequent use of metaphoric, poetic language suggests that it may bespeak the Good more accurately than a formal analysis could. Furthermore, it is remarkable that in the middle of a dialogue famous for its attack on the poets' influence in education, the philosopher and the poets Homer represents are not presented as rivals in the cave image. On the contrary, as I hope to show here, the image is partly concerned with the prophetic nature of some poets, and contrasts the soul of the philosopher and the different yet similarly oriented soul of the prophetic poet with the disoriented soul of the sophist.

I will have more to say in this paper about both of these points. My aim here is to consider the cave image as illuminating education by displaying both the context of παιδεία, or the whole within which education takes place, and the significance of the

1. *The Republic of Plato*, Allan Bloom trans., Basic Books (New York, 1968), 514a1-2. Most quotes in English from the *Republic* will be drawn from the Bloom edition; otherwise I offer my own translation. For convenience, I will refer only to the Stephanus page numbers. Wherever possible, subsequent references to the *Republic* will appear in parentheses in the text of this paper. All references to the Greek text are to the Burnet edition.

2. The earlier discussion is resumed immediately in Book VII, which begins with the words "'Next, then,' I said, 'make an image. . .'" (514a1).

sophist's, the prophetic poet's, and the philosopher's responses to this context. To help shed light on the cave image, I will make use of Socrates' discussion of poetry in Books II, III, and X, and of relevant passages in Books VI and VII. However, I will not here attempt to locate the cave image within the larger dramatic context of the *Republic* as a whole. Instead, I will limit my attention to the task of considering the whole image in its own dramatic and metaphoric terms, which is how we must begin if we are to understand its meaning.[3] My interpretation presupposes that our access to the image's philosophic purpose depends upon our sensitivity to the distinct characters alluded to in it (which display the distinct types of souls mentioned above), to the details of scene and action, and, perhaps most important, to its use of the central metaphors of vision and place. While a careful examination of the whole cave image along these lines would seem to be demanded by its dramatic distinctness and its complexity and richness of detail, the literature on the cave image in scholarly journals, including the recent literature, is dominated by attempts to correlate it with the image of the divided line.[4] The result of this emphasis is that the cave image's own distinct metaphoric significance has scarcely been seriously and thoroughly considered in this literature.[5] In light of this situation, this paper should be viewed more

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3. The image starts at 514a1 and is completed at 517a6, as is evident from Socrates' remark at 517a8-9 ("this image as a whole must be connected with what was said before").

4. Some of the recent literature is discussed in John Malcom's "The Cave Revisited," in *The Classical Quarterly*, 75 No. 1 (1981), pp. 60-68. Dale Hall discusses the "orthodox" epistemological interpretation of the cave image and provides references to less recent literature in "Interpreting Plato's Cave as an Allegory of the Human Condition," *Apeiron*, 14 No. 2 (1980), pp. 74-86. While Hall's article criticizes the orthodox reading, it overlooks important details of the cave image and presents a forced interpretation. See notes 12 and 21.

5. A. S. Ferguson's excellent two-part article "Plato's Simile of Light," in *The Classical Quarterly*, 15 Nos. 3, 4 (1921), pp. 131-152, and 16 No. 1 (1922), pp. 15-28, is an exception. Ferguson correctly emphasizes that the image "is exactly what he [Plato] declares it to be, a study of our nature with regard to παιδεία and ἀπαιδευσία" (p. 15), and rejects "the traditional application of the Cave to the Line," which distorts the cave image by reading it as an epistemological and ontological image "with much the same content and purpose" as the divided line (pp. 15, 131). Ferguson is sensitive to the dramatic and metaphoric aspects of the image, but he views the interior of the cave merely as a manipulative system and takes the image to be portraying human life as pure sophistry (pp. 18, 21-25). This causes him to interpret the philosophic life as it is presented in the image as a divine life in contrast to human life, whereas the image suggests that the philosophic life daimonically links together the divine and the human realms. Ferguson also overlooks the role of the prophetic

as attempting to introduce the complex significance of this familiar and important image than to present a final consideration of it.

The problem of place is raised explicitly near the beginning of Socrates' speech. Glaucon is able to fashion the image as Socrates instructs, but he is at first unable to grasp its relevance. He calls both the image and the prisoners ἄτοπον (515a4), which has the sense of "strange" or "odd" but literally means "out of place," or, more strongly, "placeless." This incidental remark functions as a signature for the cave image. On the surface, it expresses Glaucon's difficulty in applying the image. On a deeper level, Plato means to point to the ordinary disorientation of human life, and in particular to the placelessness of political communities — their blindness to the problem of being "out of place" and to the meaning of being "in place." To anticipate, the cave image indicates that the human realm, *qua* human, is partially, but always *only* partially, "in place" within the Whole, in that it is located with respect to, but at the same time distant and fundamentally detached from, the divine measures of human life Plato calls the Ideas. The cave image also invites us to consider from the perspective of place each of the three kinds of souls or lives mentioned above. In particular, the image suggests that the prophetic poet and the philosopher attempt in distinct ways to secure the locatedness-within-detachment of the human place. The most educated life, i.e. the philosophic life, most profoundly presents the problem of place, because the philosopher knows himself to be "in place" in neither of the regions represented by the interior and the exterior of the cave. Instead, the philosopher's comprehensive ἔρως and concern with wholeness leads him to attempt to locate these regions together in his own whole life. In a difficult sense, the philosopher (and in his own way, the prophetic poet) helps to complete the Whole, and thus to bring to completion the horizon within which we may metaphorically speak of lives being "in place" or "out of place." I will be concerned with the latter point in the last part of this paper. Let us now turn directly to the problem of human disorientation as it is formulated in the cave image.

I.

The prisoners are "like us", Socrates tells Glaucon. Their bonds would prevent them from seeing anything of themselves and one another, or of the artifacts and statues carried by above them, other than the shadows cast by the fire on the part of the cave

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poet in the cave image.

beneath them (515a5-b3).[6] If they could talk with one another, they would hold the things they see to be "the things that are" (τὰ ὄντα; 515b4-6). They would hold the truth (τὸ ἀληθές) to be "nothing other than the shadows of artificial things" (515c1-2).

Immediately after this clarification, Socrates speaks of the ἀφροσύνη ("folly") of the prisoners, which implies the disorientation of one's character as well as one's intellect (515c5). Socrates refers to the compulsion and pain involved in one former prisoner's upward journey, which he describes as a "release and healing from bonds and folly" (515c4-e4). These observations, in conjunction with Socrates' remark that we are to liken the cave to the visible domain and the exterior world to the intelligible domain (517b1-6), suggest two points. First, the whole soul initially habituates or binds itself to those objects of its perceptual and intellectual vision represented in the cave image by the shadows. Second, we may attempt to understand the disorientation this entails by considering the difference between the shadows as objects of the prisoners' vision and the Ideas as present to a soul which has come out of the cave.

The prisoners regard the shadows as if they were Ideas, for truth and being are singled out by Socrates in Book VI as the fundamental characteristics of the Ideas.[7] In virtue of their truth and being, the Ideas are genuine and stable entities by which the soul may take its bearings.[8] The sense in which the Ideas provide a measure for the soul is developed by Socrates' reference to συνήθεια, which should be translated "habituation," but one of whose meanings is "sexual intercourse." Socrates mentions συνήθεια as a necessary preparation for clear vision, both for one emerging from the cave and for one coming back into the cave and looking toward the shadows (517a2, 516a5). But συνήθεια does not result only in vision, for it also signifies the intercourse of an erotic nature with the objects of its ἔρως. As such, συνήθεια culminates in a kind of psychic procreation or transformation; the soul's clear vision of the Ideas enables it to form itself in accordance with them. Socrates speaks of "grasping" or "touching"

6. Ferguson (*op. cit.*) notes that 514b2-4 suggests that the prisoners "are seated well below the line of the firelight," so that no shadows of the prisoners themselves would be cast against the cave wall.

7. These are the characteristics of the Ideas provided by the Good, and they are specially praised by Socrates, who calls truth fair and stresses the dignity of being (508e4-5, 509b8-10).

8. The Ideas "are always the same in all respects" (479e7-8; cf. 479a2-3), and so are worthy of being leaned upon (see 508d4-5, where the soul is said to "fix" or "support" itself on the Ideas). Socrates distinguishes the many things from the Ideas as things which cannot be thought of "fixedly" (479c3-5).

in addition to "seeing," in order to suggest, through this sexual metaphor, this personal, transformative dimension in the soul's relation to the Ideas. Thus in Book VI, Socrates says of the true lover of learning that "he grasps the nature of each thing that is," and after coupling in this way with the Ideas, "having begotten intelligence and truth, he knows and lives truly" (490b3, b5-6). Intercourse with the Ideas thus makes the soul of the lover of learning into a living icon of the Ideas (and in a deeper sense, of the Good) insofar as his life displays truth.[9]

These passages suggest that παιδεία is completed by the soul's intercourse with the Ideas, which cultivates the soul in that it brings it to full bloom.[10] The philosophic soul's generative intercourse with the Ideas is imitated within the cave by the prisoners' degenerate habituation to the shadows, which they mistake for Ideas. Though the prisoners' souls are not brought to bloom, they would naturally be moulded by the things by which they take their erotic and intellectual bearings (500c5-7, 395d1-3). The prisoners' ἀφροσύνη thus turns upon the inappropriateness of the shadows as a measure for the human soul.

Socrates suggests that the shadows are an image of the public life of political communities. The shadows are a public phenomenon; they are present to the prisoners "from childhood" (514a5). They are cast by wrought items, which include "all sorts of artifacts" and "statues of men and other animals" (514c1-515a1).* These details specify the props and characters of a sort of drama. Socrates' division of the elements of the shadow-play into kinds of men and animals on the one hand, and products of the arts on the other, suggests in particular that the action displayed in the shadows consists fundamentally of humans making use of the various arts in various ways. Since the souls of the prisoners are shaped by the shadows, we may infer that the action portrayed there is intelligible to them, and that they understand the humans displayed in the shadow-drama to be engaged in the pursuit of satisfying various desires through the use of the arts. Socrates also says that the play of shadows proceeds in customary or regular ways (εἰώθει . . . πορεύεσθαι, 516d1), which makes it possible for the cave-dwellers "to divine what is going to come" (516d2).

9. Such a soul contains within itself a "clear pattern" of the Ideas (484c7-8). The truth and unity of the philosopher's life also images the unity and truth of the Good. This point is developed in section V.

10. As we will see in section V, the cave image corrects this point by indicating that the philosopher, who returns to the cave after his ascent to the Ideas and the Good, must then study the lives of his fellow citizens in order to complete his education.

*For convenience, I will henceforth use the phrase "wrought items" to designate all of the artifacts and statues carried along the cave wall.

This implies that the human activities visible in the shadow-play manifest specific customs as well as specific ends, such as the customs and ends which would characterize the everyday life of a particular political community at any given time.

As we will soon see, Socrates indicates that the prisoners to some extent interpret the shadows, and in particular, that the prisoners attempt to judge for themselves the relative worth of some of the practices, customs, and ends represented in the shadows. Nonetheless, Socrates says that the prisoners regard the shadows as "the truth." This presumably describes the prisoners' initial and general attitude toward the shadows, which is then partially called into question by the competition for honors, praises, and prizes a prisoner enters as a young man (section II). Let us therefore set aside for now the prisoners' interpretation of the shadows and the problems this raises. If the preceeding points are well-taken, the prisoners would come to regard just those ends and standards shown in the shadow-spectacle of public life as the true and authentic ends and standards, and this view would be reflected in their desires and dispositions. Furthermore, we should regard the prisoners as members of the typical πόλις whose life the moving shadows represent, even though they only observe and do not actually take part in the pursuits displayed in the shadow drama. This suggestion will be confirmed when we turn to Socrates' description of the competition in which the prisoners engage. For now, we should keep in mind that the prisoners' passivity is appropriate, given that in its portrayal of the prisoners the cave image focuses on the soul's tendency to shape itself in accordance with, and habituate itself to, what it finds to be already present in the world. Aspects of the prisoners' experience which are irrelevant to this focus are omitted. Among other things, we neither know nor need to know anything about where the prisoners came from, how they are physically sustained, and how they reproduce. (This omission is probably also meant to reflect the obscurity of the human soul and its origins.) Socrates simply says that the prisoners are enchained before the shadows "from childhood," for it is at the stage of childhood that the soul first attains a level of awareness which allows it to assimilate and habituate itself to the life of the πόλις.[11]

Nature alone is not responsible for the play of shadows in the cave. Socrates' account of how the shadows are cast indicates that their looks and their motions, and so the character of the public activity they display, are produced by human activity and

11. Just as important, it is really during childhood that the prisoners become enchained, since the soul is then most plastic but soon hardens. See Book II, 377a4 ff. and section IV of this paper.

by the use of productive τέχναι. The shadows move across the back of the cave in customary patterns because the items which cast them are carried along the cave wall in a regular sequence by human beings. And although these items are made from stone, wood, and other presumably natural materials, handicraft determines their sizes and shapes: they are either artifacts (σκεύη) or wrought (εἰργασμένα) men and animals (514b8-515a3). Socrates emphasizes that these items are manufactured when he later calls them "artificial things" (σκευαστῶν, 515c2). In what sense or senses the wrought items might be manufactured, and whether humans manufacture them, will be of primary concern to us in sections III and IV of this paper. Here, we may note a central and enduring aspect of the prisoners' ἀπαιδευσία: the spectacle of public life by which the prisoners take their bearings is radically dependent upon τέχνη and human activity, which need not be directed by a vision of the soul's proper and authentic measures, the Ideas. And since the prisoners cannot turn their heads to see the wrought items or the source of their movements, they are unaware that τέχνη and human activity determine the character of the ends and standards by which their desires and dispositions are oriented. They are thus oblivious to the permanent danger of disorientation introduced by the roles of τέχνη and human activity in shaping the measures by which they take their bearings: for it is clear that the existence, accuracy, and distinctness of images of the Ideas in the shadow-play depends upon who makes and manipulates the wrought items.[12]

12. Hall (*op. cit.*) denies that the problem of who fashions and carries the wrought items is relevant. A main point of his paper is that the level of these items represents "a natural state" which is "radically discontinuous" with, and "totally opposed" to, the "unnatural" level of the shadows (p. 82). (This in spite of the facts: the wrought items are *not* natural to the extent that τέχνη and human activity produce their shapes and movements, and their level *is* continuous with the level of the shadows in that the shadows are images of them.) In partial support of his interpretation of the level of the wrought items, Hall alleges: "If Socrates emphasizes the [wrought] objects' significance, he does not do the same for their 'porters,' and to interpret the latter as substantive figures is to confuse the setting of a drama with its subject." (p. 82). Hall would thus have us overlook, among other things, the possible significance of Socrates' remark that "some of the carriers utter sounds while others are silent," and the emphasis he gives this point by his later observation that "whenever one of the men passing by happens to utter a sound," the echo in the cave would cause the prisoners to believe that "the passing shadow was uttering the sound" (515a2-3, b7-9). These details are crucial to my own interpretation of the cave image. See section III of this paper.

II.

Socrates does not explicitly reveal the identity of the παραφέροντες, the humans who carry the wrought items. However, he does provide us with suggestive hints about who they are, as if Plato meant to entice us to take up the task of figuring out their identities for ourselves. As a preparation for this task, let us first examine Socrates' description of the peculiar competition in which the prisoners engage.

Among the prisoners, there are "honors, praises, and prizes for the man who is sharpest at making out the things that go by, and most remembers which of them are accustomed to pass before, which after, and which at the same time as others, and who is thereby most able to divine what is going to come" (516c8-d2). Socrates asks Glaucon whether the philosopher who has left the cave would "be desirous of them and envy those who are honored and hold power [τοὺς ἐνδυναστεύοντας] among these men" (516d2-4). Apparently, the unspecified honors, praises, and prizes Socrates mentions are the symbols and the substance of power among the prisoners. Socrates' question also suggests that the prisoners are motivated to compete by their desire for power and its attendant goods, and that they are envious of those who hold power. Would not the philosopher, Socrates continues, "be affected as Homer says and want very much 'to be on the soil, a serf to another man, a portionless man,' and to undergo anything whatsoever rather than to opine those things and live in that way?" (516d4-7). Quoted in this context, Achilles' words, spoken to Odysseus in Hades, suggest that the prisoners in the cave are to be compared with the shades in Hades.[13] Socrates concludes his account of the prisoners' competition by remarking that, because of the philosopher's temporarily dim vision, he would be the object of blame and laughter if he should return to the cave and rejoin the prisoners, and that, if they could get their hands on him, the prisoners would kill the man who "attempts to release them and lead them up" (516e8-517a6).

The prisoners' competition involves determining and remembering what they are looking at, and foretelling what is to come. But one cannot foretell what is to come on the basis of what one is looking at unless one has already determined what one is looking at. And since the prisoners compete in "making out the things that go by," what they are looking at is, at least initially, not equally evident to all of them. Indeed, a prisoner may rule the other prisoners only if he succeeds in convincing them that his view of what they are looking at is the best one. But what exactly is involved in

13. The quote is from *Odyssey*, XI, 489-90.

the problem of making out the shadows? At first blush, Socrates' presentation of the problem as one of vision would seem to suggest that the prisoners' difficulty lies in the limited power of their eyes to physically perceive what things they are in fact looking at in the dim firelight, e.g. to perceive whether a particular shadow is a horse or a man. But a little later in Book VII Socrates seems to indicate that the problem of the prisoners' vision is at the deepest level one of interpretation, not perception. At 520c-d, Socrates compares the vision of the philosopher-kings with that of the men who "fight over shadows with one another and form factions for the sake of ruling" in their dark common dwelling (520c7-8). As if addressing the philosopher-kings, Socrates says that they must get habituated "to seeing the dark things" along with the other, contentious men. "And, in getting habituated to it, you will see ten thousand times better than the men there, and you know what each of the phantoms [τὰ εἴδωλα] is, and of what it is a phantom, because you have seen the truth about noble, just, and good things" (520c3-6). Socrates evidently alludes in this passage to the prisoners' vision of the shadows and their competition in making them out; in the cave image we are not specifically told that the prisoners form factions for the sake of ruling, but given their desire for power, coupled with their envy of those who rule, one can infer that factions are always at least potentially present among the prisoners. According to this passage, the prisoners' competition centers on interpreting the significance of the shadows they perceive. The first issue over which the prisoners compete, what it is they are looking at, would in each case be decisively settled — if only from the viewpoint of the philosopher — by the knowledge of whether the shadows image (or fail to image) what is in truth noble, just, or good. For if the philosopher-king sees far better than the prisoners and knows "what each phantom is" because he knows the truth about noble, just, and good things, then the competition of the dim-sighted prisoners, who fight over the same issue of making out the shadows or of "what each phantom is," must center on the nobility, justice, and goodness of what is displayed in the shadows. In particular, Socrates suggests here that the competing judgments the prisoners put forth concern the relative worth of the things they see, e.g., the nobility or baseness of certain ends, the justice or injustice of certain laws, and the goodness or badness of certain practices.

According to the interpretation I have just set forth, the prisoners' competition for power especially images political competition in actual political communities; the issues at stake in the prisoners' competition are, according to Socrates, precisely the sort of

issues over which men dispute and form factions in actual cities.[14] But why is this sort of competition included in the cave image? Clearly, the prisoners' interpretation of the shadows by which they take their bearings is important to the cave image's representation of our nature in its παιδεία and ἀπαιδευσία. And Socrates apparently means to indicate that the kind of competition he describes provides the fundamental context within which the prisoners engage in interpretation. Perhaps he even means to suggest that the desires for power, honors, prizes, and praises which draw men into this competition themselves give rise to the unending interpretation of that which each prisoner initially and uncritically accepts as "the truth." On this view, worldly ἔρως in its quest for satisfaction is an engine which drives men unceasingly to call into question the previously settled boundaries of their political community, and which largely directs men's judgments about what things are noble, just, or good.

The latter suggestion, and the interpretation of the nature of the prisoners' competition put forth above, are supported by a passage from Book VI which appears to be directly relevant to the prisoners' competition. This passage (492b5-d7) constitutes the first part of a discussion which seems to anticipate and even, as Ferguson suggests, to provide a commentary on aspects of the cave image.[15] In this discussion, which runs from 492b5-493c8, Socrates is concerned to show that the many on the one hand and the sophists on the other affect men's education in identical ways, in that they both regard the convictions of the many as wisdom, and both transmit and perpetuate the ἀφροσύνη embodied in these convictions. At 492b5-d7, Socrates gives an ironic account of the "education" (παιδεία) provided for a young man by "the many gathered together" in "assemblies, courts, theaters, army camps, or any other common meeting of a multitude" (492b5-7). In what he says here, Socrates hints that he has his eye on the image of the cave he will soon relate. Like the group of prisoners, the assembled many act as spectators and judges of speeches and deeds: "with a great deal of uproar, [they] blame some of the things said or done, and praise others, both in excess, shouting and clapping" (492b7-9). And we are reminded of the cave when Socrates adds "and, besides, the rocks and the very place surrounding them echo and redouble the uproar of blame and praise" (492b9-c2). Under these conditions, Socrates asserts, any private education for a young man who falls in with the many would be "swept away . . . by the flood" of blame and praise,

14. See Socrates' account of the degeneration of regimes in Book VIII, 547b2 ff.
15. See Ferguson, *op. cit.*, p. 15, note 2.

"so that he'll say the same things are noble and base as they [the many] do, practice what they practice, and be such as they are" (492c5-8). Socrates adds that the man who is not persuaded by the many is punished with "dishonor, fines, and death" (492d6-7). These punishments bring to mind the laughter, blame, and attempted execution the philosopher might suffer upon his return to the cave, and, by contrast, the honors, prizes, and praises the ruling prisoners enjoy.

Taken as partly anticipating the cave image, this passage sheds light on the compulsion the competing prisoners suffer, and in conjunction with Socrates' remarks at 520c-d, it clarifies the ἀφροσύνη of the prisoners and its transmission and perpetuation among them. Although they have no clear vision of what is truly noble, just, or good, the prisoners' interpretation of the shadows is anchored by no inquiry into the truth. It is instead subordinated to their desires for honor, praises, prizes, and power. The current habitual orientation of these desires, which are nourished and inflected by the competition, determines what the prisoners call "noble," "just," and "good." Socrates suggests that the effect of the prisoners' competition upon its participants is comprehensive, yet subtle. Like the young man among the many, a young man among the prisoners would give himself over to what appears to be the prevailing manner of praise and blame. But he would not do so out of a conscious calculation of rewards and punishments. It is rather because his youthful and malleable soul is "swept away" by the example of so many other souls, that he would come to reflect in his speeches, his deeds, and his thoughts and desires the dominant vision of what things are noble, just, and good. The competing prisoners, then, as the image of being "swept away" suggests, are not conscious that their judgments are determined by the current nature of the competition. Just as each of them at one time fully accepted the shadows as "the truth," now, in calling into question aspects of what is displayed in the shadow-play, they would regard their own judgments as "the truth" without being aware of how their joint activity determines the orientation of their souls.

We can now see clearly the similarity of the prisoners in the cave to the shades in Hades. According to Homer, the shades in Hades are "ἀφραδέες . . . βροτῶν εἴδωλα καμόντων," ". . . the witless phantoms of worn-out men," for at death the soul of a man "like a dream, flits away, and hovers to and fro."[16] The shades in Hades do not recognize Odysseus and cannot speak the truth to him without drinking of the blood he provides.[17]Similarly, the

16. *Odyssey*, XI, 476, 222.
17. *Odyssey*, XI, 141-154, 390.

prisoners know nothing of the world outside the cave and cannot recognize, let alone understand, the man who is accustomed to seeing in its light. Their condition is ἀφροσύνη; without φρόνησις, they act and speak as "in a dream" (520c7), and their unstable souls are swept here and there, as if they too, like the shades in Hades and the shadows which play across the cave wall, were insubstantial εἴδωλα.[18]

III.

The men who carry the wrought items are divided by Socrates into two groups: "some of the porters [τῶν παραφερόντων] utter sounds [φθεγγομένους] while others are silent" (515a2-3). Socrates has more to say about the first group a little later. At 515b7-9, he observes that, because of the echo in the cave, whenever one of the porters happens to utter a sound (φθέξαιτο) the prisoners would believe that the passing shadow was uttering it (τὸ φθεγγόμενον). Glaucon responds with an oath (515b10), a detail which perhaps underscores the significance of Socrates' observation — especially since it is the only oath Glaucon utters during Socrates' presentation of the cave image.

What are we to make of the first of the two groups distinguished above, the silent porters? According to our earlier analysis, the play of shadows is shaped by human activity and by the use of as yet unspecified sorts of τέχναι. A reasonable guess is that the shadow-scenes cast by the wrought items the silent porters bear represent in particular the accumulated cultural tradition of a typical political community, the current configuration of relatively settled customs, ends, and practices which the city hands down to its children. These scenes succeed one another silently because they represent the received cultural "backdrop" against which the forward-looking speech of the prisoners' competition takes place, and which, in part, that competition calls into question. It is this "backdrop" — which would keep pace with and reflect whatever relatively fixed changes have been brought about in the habit and character of public life by the prisoners' competition and by other means — to which the prisoners are habituated "from childhood."

With this tentative identification of the role of the silent porters in hand, we may turn to their sound-uttering companions, whose presence raises a number of difficult questions. Why does Socrates

18. Cf. Ferguson, *op. cit.*, pp. 19, 20: "With such art does Plato suggest that the cave-dweller is 'a hunter of Shadows, himself a shade' . . . . Here men sit with 'twilight eyes,' guessing at mysteries that are only the mysteries of riddles. If the redeemer comes, he speaks a language that they do not understand."

repeatedly use the verb φθέγγεσθαι in discussing this group, a word which is here best translated "to utter a sound" because it is often used of the mere production of sound, as opposed to actual speech? And what is the significance of the echo? Do the porters who utter sounds wish to address the prisoners? Some reflection on this echo will allow us to sharpen the last two questions. We know that the prisoners can see only the shadows on the cave wall and can see nothing of themselves and one another; they are "compelled to keep their heads motionless throughout life," so that they cannot even see their own bodies (515a6-8, a9-b1). Furthermore, the presence of an echo in the cave would mean that the prisoners' own voices would *also* echo off the cave wall. Socrates' reasoning about the echo must apply in their case as well: whatever a prisoner in this curious situation might believe about his own voice, he would believe that the utterances of his fellow prisoners came from the passing shadows. Hence, the prisoners would be unable to distinguish the source of a sound uttered by one of the porters from the source of one uttered by a fellow prisoner; in both cases, they would believe that the sounds come from the shadows. In addition, whenever a prisoner should speak to anyone else, he would understand himself to be talking to the shadows.[19] Then, do the porters who utter sounds intend to conceal their special position within the cave, so that to the prisoners they may themselves seem to be prisoners? And if so, do they wish to talk to the prisoners about the same things and in the same way as the prisoners talk among themselves, i.e., to enter into the competition over the shadows?

I suggest that we approach these questions on the basis of the second part of the passage at 492b5-493c8, in which Socrates turns from the "education" provided by the many to that provided by the sophists. Let us first review this part of the passage (493a5-c8), and then consider how it may shed light on the role of the sound-uttering porters in the cave image. Socrates here completes his comparison of the false wisdom shared by the many and the sophists. The many view the sophists as "their rivals in art." In this, the many are partly correct. The sophist differs from the many to the extent that he detaches himself from them and makes them an object of study, and he is the rival of the many in that he knows and teaches a way to manipulate them for one's own purposes. Thus, the sophist approaches the many like a man "who learns by heart the angers and desires of a great, strong creature he is rearing," and who studies how to come near it and

19. Ferguson (*op. cit.*) confirm both of these observations in a long footnote; see note 5, pp. 21-22.

take hold of it, when and why it becomes difficult and gentle, "and, particularly, under what conditions it is accustomed to utter [εἴωθεν φθέγγεσθαι] its several sounds, and, in turn, what sort of sounds uttered by another [ἄλλου φθεγγομένου] make it tame and angry" (493a9-b5). Yet the many are in another sense wrong to see the sophist as their rival. For what he learns by "associating and spending time" with the many — the convictions they hold when they are gathered together — he teaches and calls wisdom. And having spent his time in association with the many, he knows "nothing in truth about which of these desires is noble, or base, or good, or evil, or just, or unjust," but instead "applies all these names following the great animal's opinions." He calls what pleases the many good and what pains it bad, and calls the necessary (τἀναγκαῖα) just and noble, "neither having seen nor being able to show someone else how much the nature of the necessary and the good really differ." Wouldn't such a man, Socrates asks rhetorically, be "out of place [ἄτοπος] as an educator?" (493b5-c8).

One hint that the preceding portrayal of the sophist may be related to what Socrates says in the cave image about the porters is provided by the rather striking (because relatively infrequent) occurrence of the verb φθέγγεσθαι in both contexts. Its use at 493a5-c8 in regard to the speech of the many, whose utterances are directed by feelings of pleasure and pain, and the speech of those who address the many with sophistic "wisdom," but know "nothing in truth" about what is noble, just, and good, is consistent with its narrow range of uses elsewhere in the *Republic*. Setting aside the cave image, φθέγγεσθαι, appearing in various grammatical forms, is used in three distinct but related ways in the *Republic*: in regard to the speech of men who in some fundamental sense do not understand the things they are talking about, the speech of men carried away by their emotions, and the mere production of sound (as distinct from actual speech). Thus, again setting aside the cave image, whenever φθέγγεσθαι is used of speech in the *Republic*, it indicates an utterance in which either understanding or the controlling influence of reason over the emotions and desires, and perhaps at times both, are absent.[20] Given the specific range of connotations the word takes on through its use in the dialogue,

20. Φθέγγεσθαι occurs in various forms fifteen times in the *Republic* (including one occurrence of the related noun φθέγμα) in eleven different passages (Leonard Brandwood, *A Word Index to Plato*, Leeds, 1976, pp. 937-38.) Apart from the cave image and the depiction of the sophist at 492b5-493c8, which account for a total of five occurrences of φθέγγεσθαι, the word is used in the following ways: It signifies the speech of men who do not understand what they are talking about at VI 505c4, where Socrates says men "more refined" than the many "utter the name of the good" without grasping its meaning, at VII 527a9, where he asserts that

Socrates' repetition of φθέγγεσθαι in the cave image suggests that if the porters who utter sounds are indeed speaking and not just making noise, then they are either carried away by their emotions or, like the sophists who learn the customary "sounds" of the many, they do not understand the meaning of the words they are saying. In addition, although Socrates does not actually say so, it would be appropriate and precise to say that the competing prisoners themselves φθέγγεσθαι, since they do not know what is noble, just, or good, and since their reason is ruled by their common desires and feelings of pleasure and pain. In light of our previous reflections on the cave's echo, we may well wonder whether the sound-uttering porters and the prisoners speak in the same thoughtless idiom.

It is very tempting to try to answer the questions we have raised by applying Socrates' portrayal of the sophist at 493a3-c8 directly to the cave image, and to suppose that at least some of the porters who utter sounds make use of the "wisdom" taught by the sophists in order to gain power among the prisoners. The strongest support for this interpretation is that it convincingly answers the questions raised by Socrates' intriguing remarks about these porters. To begin with, it is consistent with the cave image to suppose that one could be on the level of the wrought items and still focus one's interest and attention on the shadow-play and

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those who take up geometry "speak as though they were men of action and were making all the arguments for the sake of action, uttering sounds like 'squaring,'" etc., without knowing the end for which geometry is pursued, and at VIII 568a11, where Socrates ironically praises the "shrewd thought" uttered by Euripides that "tyrants are wise from intercourse with the wise." It is used of those who speak while carried away by emotion at I 336b8, where Thrasymachus bursts into the discussion "just like a wild beast," and at X 604a6, where Socrates says that a decent man who has just lost a son or has had some similar misfortune would, in private, give himself over to his pain and "dare to utter many things of which he would be ashamed if someone were to hear." Φθέγγεσθαι is used of the mere production of sound at II 368c2, where Socrates says that he ought to defend justice while he is still breathing "and able to utter a sound," at VII 531 a8, where it signifies the sounding of a note by a musical instrument, and at X 615e5, where Socrates in relating the myth of Er speaks of the φθέγμα produced by the mouth of heaven. It is used to suggest something like the mere production of sound at 463e2, where Socrates says it would be ridiculous if the citizens of the best regime "merely uttered through their mouths," without the corresponding deeds, the names of kinship. The only other occurrence of φθέγγεσθαι is at V 462c3, where Socrates speaks of the citizens uttering "such phrases as 'my own' and 'not my own' at the same time." Here, it is colored by its later use in the same passage at 463e2. Socrates seems to imply that the citizens would really only pay "lip service" to their feelings of kinship with all other citizens.

the prisoner's competition. The prisoner who is dragged up to the level of the wrought items turns back toward the shadows (515e1-4); apparently, nothing about his experience of seeing the wrought items prevents him from doing so. In particular, the level of the wrought items represents a deeper understanding than that of the prisoners, but there is no reason to assume that the ascent to the wrought items brings a better understanding of the Ideas, or even that the wrought items are necessarily better images of the Ideas than the shadows.[21] When Socrates tells Glaucon to liken the cave to the visible domain and the outer world to the intelligible domain, he neither mentions the divided line nor further divides the visible and intelligible spheres into regions of greater and lesser clarity, as he did when he introduced the divided line (509d6-510a3). Following Socrates' interpretive suggestion, the prisoner who is dragged up before the wrought items "sees more correctly" being "somewhat nearer to what is and more turned toward beings" (515d1-3), not because the statues and artifacts provide some new, positive cognition of the Ideas, but because it is evident to the prisoner that the wrought items are shaped by τέχνη and manipulated by humans. Hence the prisoner can now see clearly that the shadows are products of τέχνη and human activity.

To proceed with our analysis. Unlike the seated prisoners, the sound-uttering porters with whom we are concerned understand and make use of the fact that the shadows are produced by human work. Their physical separation from the prisoners below them, and their manipulation of the wrought items and therefore of the shadows, reflect the detachment from and manipulation of the many exhibited by those who employ sophistic "wisdom." Some of these porters have learned from studying with sophists the collective nature of the prisoners, so as to be able to predict, on each occasion, how the prisoners as a group will respond to various sights and sounds. These men are of course constrained in the work of uttering sounds and casting shadows by the need to satisfy the current desires and convictions of the prisoners, and to respect the customary succession of shadows to which the prisoners are habituated. And the things to which the prisoners are

21. Consider that the life-size shadow cast by a skillful pair of hands on a projection screen presents a better image of a particular animal than the hands themselves. Thus the metaphor of vision, at any rate, provides no basis for assuming that the wrought items are better images of the Ideas than the shadows. Hall (*op. cit.*) argues to the contrary: "it is evident that seeing the fire and objects must stand for the natural state achieved when men are freed of *apaideusia* by the right *paideia*. . . . [such men] are turned towards the Good, and the prospect of further progress towards the daylight is open to them." (p. 82). I have already stated the major faults of Hall's interpretation of the wrought items (see note 12).

habituated also exercise an internal compulsion upon these students of sophistic "wisdom," for the latter aim at honor and power among the prisoners, and so share fundamentally in the prisoners' desires and convictions. But their sophistic "wisdom," which is organized as a τέχνη (493b6-7), gives them a distinct advantage in the contest: they can anticipate what sights and sounds will please the prisoners and elicit praise from them. In particular, these porters can utter such sounds as will on each occasion make the prisoners most favorably disposed toward the shadows cast by the items they themselves are carrying, and with which the prisoners identify them. Furthermore, their special position within the cave and their manipulation of the wrought items strongly suggests that they may also be able partially to alter the movements and shapes of the shadows. Perhaps they can select which wrought items they will carry, so as to best suit the shadows with which their voices are associated to the current scene displayed on the cave wall. More speculatively, these porters may be able to refashion the items they are carrying. Such alterations in the shadow-play, introduced gradually and supported by the clever use of utterances, would partially alter both the public activity displayed in the shadows and the desires and convictions of the prisoners.

The sophistic τέχνη thus enables men effectively to manipulate a variety of politically self-serving appearances, to direct the ways in which others interpret these appearances, and so, partially and gradually to transform the practices, customs, and ends of the city. On the basis of the cave image and the passage at 493a3-c8, the following picture of the sophist emerges. The sophist publicly agrees with the many about the noble, the just, and the good, and this useful public acknowledgement is reflected in his erotic orientation. Socrates explains that the sophist learns the nature of the many through συνουσία (493b5); this intercourse with the many presumably infects him with or inflames his desire for honor, praise, and power, at least among his students and potential students and other sophists (cf. 516c8-d4). But although his soul is shaped by his intercourse with the many, the "education" provided by the sophist springs from his recognition that human artifice may manipulate the many and shape their desires and convictions. The sophist sees necessity in the nature of the souls of the many; his art consists in knowing and being able to teach others how "to produce the things these men [the many] praise" (493d6-7). But this necessity can be partly controlled and directed by the art he teaches: the many are to the sophist a "θρέμματος . . . τρεφομένου," literally a "nursling. . . being reared" by him (493a9-10). His art allows one to manipulate public life and thereby

also to alter partially the erotic and intellectual orientation of the many; its application will thus help to produce a new necessity, specific to the new orientation of the many. Yet the sophist neither knows nor seeks any other standard for the application of his art than "the necessary" (τἀναγκαῖα, 493c4), or the habitual desires and convictions of the many, which are themselves partly shaped by the use of his art or by natural cleverness.

With due caution, the sophist teaches his students that humans produce the measures by which they take their bearings, but denies that there is a true and appropriate measure for this productive activity itself.[22] He may be represented in the terms of the cave image as one who teaches others how to manipulate the shadows, having himself ascended to the level of the wrought items and then returned to the level of the prisoners.[23] The realization that humans produce the shadows influences the philosophic soul and the souls of the sophist and his students in opposite ways. While the cave image shows the prisoner who will finally leave the cave and view the originals being compelled and dragged upward, Socrates also says that the turning of his soul occurs "by nature" (φύσει, 515c5). We may understand this to mean that his desire inclines by nature or intrinsically toward philosophy, for although some (perhaps wholly internal) compulsion would be involved in freeing a soul from its initial habitual ἀφροσύνη, a soul without philosophic ἔρως could never be compelled to be philosophic.[24] If this is correct, the philosophic soul's first inclination to turn back to the shadows (515e1-4) would be mastered by his philosophic ἔρως, which would be inflamed by the problem of the production of human measures. But the souls of the sophist and his students are hardened in their ἀφροσύνη by the recognition of that production. The sophist's solution to the instability engendered by this recognition is to cling to the produced measures; like the prisoner whose eyes are blinded by the light of the fire, he turns back toward the relative clarity of the shadows. This personal predisposition is reflected in the sophist's public speech. The sophist

22. On account of his rivalry with the many, the sophist exercises peculiar caution; his public speech must conceal as well as partly reveal the manipulative purpose of his art.

23. Socrates' remark that the prisoners would kill the man who attempts to release them and lead them up applies to the sophist as much as to the philosopher. Socrates' public trial and his execution provide a fair indication that the many are unable to distinguish philosophy from sophistry.

24. This corrects the notion, advanced later by Socrates, that in the best regime the best natures could be (or alternatively, would have to be) compelled to ascend to the Good and then compelled to return to the πόλις to rule (519c8 ff., 540a4-b7). Socrates also says that in other cities, philosophers "grow up spontaneously" (520b2).

preaches the worthlessness of philosophy as measured by the current desires and convictions of the many: philosophy blinds one, or causes one to become erotically and intellectually disoriented (517a2-4). Hence the sophist, who is himself blind to the question of the proper place of the human realm in regard to the Ideas, is "out of place" not only as an educator but also as a prophet: his public speech indiscriminately exalts to the level of the Ideas those measures which are in fact produced by humans.

IV.

Since the cave image deals with our ἀπαιδευσία and ἀφροσύνη, it is appropriate that it represents the corrupting influence upon education exercised by the sophists and by the many in their competition for honor and power. Indeed, it is now clear that the image, in being concerned with "us," is concerned with the common and ingrained ἀπαιδευσία and ἀφροσύνη of the members of actually existing political communities. If we consider this focal concern of the cave image within the larger context of the *Republic,* the question naturally arises whether the poets and their poems are also represented in the image. For in the *Republic* Socrates spends much time criticizing the poets on the grounds that their works corrupt men's souls, and his extensive attention to the poets and their works responds to and reflects the fact that certain great poems, and, in general, the activity of producing and enjoying poetry, are deeply ingrained in the lives of actual cities. Thus, the critical review of poetry which covers much of Books II and III arises from Socrates' examination of the common and well established practice, "discovered over a great expanse of time," of educating children in music and then gymnastic, and in particular, of first of all telling tales to children in order to shape their souls (376e1 ff.). Similarly, Socrates' criticisms in Book X of "poetry directed to pleasure and imitation" — in particular, the poetry of Homer and the tragedians — are especially pertinent because of "the inborn love of such poetry we owe to our rearing in these fine regimes" (607c4-5, 607e6-608a1).

In his discussion of the rearing and education of the guardians, Socrates emphasizes the power of poetry to mold the human soul — and so its potential to corrupt the soul as well as to benefit it. This discussion appropriately begins with a critique of the great tales told to young children, because "the beginning is the most important part of every work. . . . For at that stage it [a young and tender thing] is most plastic, and each thing assimilates itself to the model whose stamp anyone wishes to give it" (377a12,b1-3). It is essential for the education of young children that the tales they are told contain only the best models, for what they take into

their opinions "has a tendency to become hard to eradicate and unchangeable" (378d8-e1). Furthermore, even if a young person should become aware that the poems he hears are in fact made-up tales, it would have little effect on the habituation of his soul to the models contained in them. Indeed, whether young or old, we humans tend to "give ourselves over to following the imitation" contained in the most well-crafted poems (605d3). This vicarious experience is similar to that of an actor who gives himself over to the imitative role assigned to him. Whether actually acting out or simply hearing well-crafted poetry, the soul is inclined to "get a taste for the being from its imitation," so that even the things it vicariously experiences through poetry and in this extended sense "imitates" would tend to "become established as habits and nature [εἰς ἔθη τε καὶ φύσιν] in body and sounds and in thought" (395c7, d2-3).

Now, an essential part of Socrates' criticism of the poets in the *Republic* is that they fall far short of providing the best models for human life, because their poems flatter base feelings and desires and help to cause the soul to be carried away by passion.[25] Furthermore, Socrates painstakingly argues in Book X that the poets, as "imitators of phantoms of virtue [εἰδώλων ἀρετῆς]," know nothing in truth about the good and the bad or the beautiful and the ugly, but "whatever looks to be fair to the many who don't know anything — that he [the poet] will imitate" (600e5, 602b2-3). If we are persuaded by Socrates' allegations against poetry, then on the basis of its primary role in the "education" to be found in existing political communities, its radical influence in shaping men's characters, its corrupting content, the ignorance of its practitioners, and its subservience to the opinions of the many, poetry would seem to be a sister of sophistry and to deserve a place alongside it in the cave image. Perhaps, then, Socrates means to include the poets among the porters in the cave image, and their poetic works among the wrought items these porters bear along the cave wall.

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25. Commenting on the passage at 605d, in which Socrates speaks of the imitation of heroes in mourning, H. G. Gadamer writes: "even he who merely watches such imitation without acting himself yields to the thing imitated in sympathy, which is to say that he forgets himself in vicariously experiencing through the other whom he sees before him. . . . The charm of imitation and the joy taken in it are a form of self-forgetfulness which is most pronounced where what is represented is itself self-forgetfulness, i.e., passion." (*Dialogue and Dialectic: Eight Hermeneutical Studies on Plato*, trans. P. Christopher Smith, Yale, 1980, p. 64). On this point see also Charles Griswold's insightful article "The Ideas and the Criticism of Poetry in Plato's *Republic*, Book X," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 19 (1981), pp. 135-50. Like Gadamer, Griswold argues that "it is the poet's power to *produce* passions that makes him so dangerous" (p. 147, cf. also pp. 142-44).

In partial support of this suggestion, we may note that the effect of poetry on the human soul would be fittingly represented by the effect of the shadows on the prisoners, who become habituated to the shadows and come to regard them as the truth. As we have seen, a soul, especially if it is very young, has a strong tendency to assimilate itself to the models contained in the poetry it hears or sees acted out. This means that a soul will naturally be inclined to regard the opinions, ends, and standards which animate men's behavior in the poems (or their equivalent) it hears everyday as the authentic and authoritative opinions, ends, and standards, and in this specific sense, to regard these poems as "the truth" in just the same way as the prisoners in the cave come to see the shadows as "the truth." In addition, insofar as it represents a specific difference in levels of understanding, the separation of the level of the wrought items and the level of the shadows in the cave image adequately displays an important aspect of poetry's effect on the human soul. Even if a poet does not substantially shape the models his poems contain, he must at least select certain models in advance and reproduce them in his poems. And while poems are in one sense obviously artifacts, it would not be commonly recognized, especially by young audiences, that the models poems contain are artificial or produced images, and that, as such, they may distort or entirely fail to represent the best models for human life. Instead, whatever models are imaged in poems, by insinuating themselves into a soul's habits and nature, would come to be regarded as the authentic models of what is good, noble, and just. One further consideration: the items carried by the porters perhaps include great works of poetry of the sort which have become embedded in the cultural traditions of political communities, such as the great myths of Hesiod and Homer (cf. 377c7 ff.). Such tales are part of a city's received cultural heritage, so that we would expect them to form a part of the silent backdrop of successive shadow-scenes against which the eristic speeches and manipulations of the prisoners take place.

Once again, we are aided in our interpretation of the cave image by a passage from another part of the *Republic*. Socrates' discussion in Book VI of the philosophic craftsman of the virtues (δημιουργός, 500d6) looks forward to the cave image and supports the suggestion that we are to include the poets and their works on the level of the wrought items. In the light of Socrates' extensive criticism in the *Republic* of poetry and the poets, this passage (500c9-501c2) is noteworthy for two reasons: it suggests that poetry is the primary means by which the philosophic craftsman might "paint" or shape the souls of members of an actual political community and (to this limited extent) educate the community, and it surprisingly

presents Homer, whom Socrates calls in Book X "the first teacher and leader of all these fine tragic things" (595c1-2), as a prophet who has insight into and gives voice to what is divine in human life. As we will see, this view of Homer is further supported in the cave image by the reference to him in connection with the quote from the *Odyssey*.

At the beginning of Book VI Socrates compares the philosopher, who has a "clear pattern in the soul" of the Ideas, to a painter: "after looking off, as painters do, toward what is most genuine [τὸ ἀληθέστατον]," the philosopher would be able to "give laws about what is noble, just, and good" (484c7-d2). Socrates again takes up this comparison in his discussion of the philosophic craftsman. The philosophers, who have become "orderly and divine" in their souls through keeping company with the orderly and the divine, would be able to use the divine paradigm in shaping the dispositions of men (ἀνθρώπων ἤθη) and the outline of the city (500c9-e3). They would first wipe clean the city and the dispositions of men "as though they were a tablet" (501a2).[26] Next, they would "outline the shape of the regime," and after that they would turn to men's dispositions. They would look both toward the Ideas and toward what is in human beings, "and thus, mixing and blending the practices [τῶν ἐπιτηδευμάτων] as ingredients, they would produce the image of man, taking hints from exactly that phenomenon in human beings which Homer too called god-like and the image of god" (501b4-7).

The image of painting used here is consistent with Socrates' portrayal in the *Republic* of the Ideas as paradigms accessible to intellectual vision. But curiously, according to Socrates the philosophic craftsmen produce the image of man by "painting" directly onto human souls (501a2, b9-c2). In actuality, paintings are executed in some medium other than the soul, and they affect men's souls only through men's vision of them. The apparent immediacy of the philosophic craftsmen's painting suggests that the freshly cleaned souls are highly receptive to their formative influence. This point is reinforced when Socrates explains later, at the end of Book VII, how the philosophic craftsmen will start their work with clean souls: the philosophic rulers will send everyone over the age of ten out of the city, and will rear the remaining children in their own manners and laws (τρόποισι καὶ νόμοις) far away from the dispositions (ἠθῶν) these children have from

26. "And that's hardly easy," adds Socrates. At 540e5-541a4, Socrates puts forth a specific suggestion for "wiping the tablet" which is beset with serious difficulties: everyone over the age of ten must leave the city, so that the remaining children may be reared by the philosophic ruler/craftsmen.

their parents (540e5-541a4). This remark identifies the philosophic rulers with the philosophic craftsmen we are now considering, and indicates that the philosophic craftsmen, in order to begin with a fresh "tablet," will start with very young souls. They do so not only because such souls are most easily cleaned, but also because these souls are most plastic (377b1-3). Thus, one of Socrates' recommendations in Book II for rearing children reflects the plasticity or receptivity of very young souls and suggests the directness of their nurses' and mothers' influence upon them: these adults are to "shape their souls with myths more than their bodies with hands" (377c3-4). Still, whether the basic metaphor for soul-shaping is sculpture, as it is in Book II, or painting, as it is here, the shaping of souls is not really immediate, but requires some instrument. Nurses and mothers tell myths to shape souls; how are we to understand the process by which the philosophic craftsmen "paint" them?

Socrates' identification of the philosophic ruler and the philosophic craftsman (cf. 540a8-b1) makes this question important for our understanding of the cave image. For in Book VII Socrates makes clear that the philosophic ruler's rule takes place *within* the cave (519d4 ff., 539e2 ff.). We are thus asked to see the philosophic ruler/craftsman's soul-painting in the terms of the cave image. Now, the difference between the philosophic ruler who returns to the cave and the cave-dwellers over whom he is to rule sheds light on an important implication of the image of painting. Since the men whose souls the philosophic ruler/craftsman paints are equated in the cave image with the cave-dwellers, the painting of their souls with images of the Ideas is a surrogate for the education they will never have, i.e. the ascent from the cave and the vision of the Ideas. But whereas the philosopher who advances to the Ideas comes to have a clear pattern of them *in* his soul, those cave-dwellers who are ruled by a philosopher merely have practices which image the paradigm provided by the Ideas "painted" *onto* their souls. The image of painting thus points out the limits of philosophic rule, for it suggests that the philosophic ruler/craftsman's formation of the souls of the ruled is, from the lofty viewpoint of genuine education, entirely superficial.[27] We will return to the superficial nature of this education later. Here, we may also note that painting is present in the cave image in the somewhat extended sense of "painting" on the back of the

27. The myth of Er makes this explicit as a crucial difference between the philosopher and the non-philosopher. See 619b2ff., where the ἀφροσύνη of one who "lived in an orderly regime in his former life, participating in virtue by habit, without philosophy" (619c6-d1) is made explicit by his unthinking choice of a tyrant's awful lot.

cave by means of shadows.[28] Furthermore, it is essential for the philosophic ruler/craftsman to make use of the shadow images of noble, just, and good things in governing the cave-dwellers: the philosopher's ability to govern "in a state of waking" when he returns to the cave is based on his knowledge of what the phantoms (εἴδωλα), i.e. the shadows, are and what they image (520c3-7, especially c6: καὶ οὕτω . . .). It thus seems reasonable to assume that, in the metaphoric terms of the cave image, the philosophic ruler/craftsman's "painting" of clean young souls is represented as shadow-painting by means of the wrought items. To rephrase our earlier question: in what concrete terms are we to understand this shadow-painting as an image of shaping freshly-cleaned souls?

Socrates' reference to Homer in his discussion of the philosophic craftsman gives us a broad clue. In mixing and blending the practices like paints in order to produce the image of man (τὸ ἀνδρείκελον), the philosophic craftsman takes hints from that which Homer called god-like and the image of god in men (501b4-7). Socrates chooses the word ἀνδρείκελον especially to fit the metaphor of painting, since it also means "a flesh-colored pigment." With this additional shade of meaning, Homer's knowledge of that which is "the image of god" (θεοείκελον) in men conveys the sense that Homer knows which divine hues are suitable in coloring a painted image of man that remains faithful to man's nature as a human being. Homer thus appears in this passage as an expert in just that sort of painting of souls in which the philosophic craftsman engages. One implication of this important point is that the philosophic ruler/craftsman "paints" souls primarily by means of Homer's own art, i.e. by use of poetry. This result is not surprising, given our earlier analysis of the formative effect of poetry on human souls and the suitability of the imagery of the cave to represent this effect. Furthermore, the representation of poetry as a kind of painting is in harmony with the rest of the *Republic*. Socrates compares poets and poetry to painters and paintings when he first turns to the education of the guardians in Book II (377e1-3), and he develops this comparison extensively in Book X. There, Socrates says that the poet is concerned with "the crafting of phantom-images" (τῇ τῶν εἰδώλων δημιουργίᾳ), which he "colors" with names, phrases, meter, rhythm, and harmony in order to charm men into thinking that he speaks well (599a7, 601a4-b4). Socrates claims in particular that the deceptive charm of their poems allows Homer and the tragedians to trick men into thinking that the phantasms they produce concerning "all arts and

28. Socrates mentions "shadow painting" (σκιαγραφία) and puppeteering together in Book X in the context of his discussion of poetry, painting, and imitation in general (602d1-4).

all things human that have to do with virtue and vice, and the divine things too" are in fact "things that are [ὄντα]" (598d7-599a3). These passages incidentally prepare us for the implicit reference to the cave image contained in Socrates' later association of poetry with shadow-painting and puppeteering (602d1-4).

The philosophic ruler/craftsman, then, upon his return to the cave, makes use of old and traditional methods of "painting" souls in his new city, methods Socrates groups under the name of μουσική (376e2 ff.). He "paints" young dispositions primarily with poetic tales he has fashioned, which in the imagery of the cave are represented as moving puppets and would appear to the souls below as shadow-scenes. As we have already noted, this imagery is faithful to both the directness of poetry's effect on young souls and the way in which humans tend to overlook the artificial character of the models contained in poetry.

At this point, one might raise the objection that, if the philosophic ruler/craftsman uses old methods of painting souls when he descends to the cave, he nonetheless does so in a very restricted and hence new way. After all, in Book II Socrates and Adeimantus agree that, of the poets, only the "unmixed imitator of the decent" is to be allowed into their city, and in Book X Socrates declares that "only so much of poetry as is hymns to the gods or celebration of good men should be admitted into a city" (397d4-5, 607a3-5). In addition, one might maintain that, since the imitative poet is set beside the painter as his "antistrophe" in order to bring out the poet's ignorance and base influence upon the soul, the philosophic ruler/craftsman should not at all be compared to Homer as a painter of souls.

Two points must be made in response to these possible objections. First of all, even hymns to the gods or celebrations of good men make use of poetic representations of gods and men, whether their style is, according to Socrates' distinctions at 392c6 ff., narrative, imitative, or a mixture of the two.[29] And in order for these poetic representations to take hold of young souls, they must have the power to charm souls. It is in this crucial respect that the philosophic ruler/craftsman must have the "painterly" skill exercised by Homer and the other poets, for it is by the "colors of the music" alone that the poets endow their poems with charm — a charm akin to that of the faces of boys in the bloom of youth (601b2-7). As is suggested by Socrates' remark in Book II that "musical matters should end in love matters that concern the beautiful" (403c6-7), this comparison of poems to fair boys is perfectly appropriate to

29. Socrates allows for both narrative and imitative styles in the καλλίπολις. See Griswold, *op. cit.*, p. 141 and note 6, p. 137.

Socrates' understanding of the use of μουσική. Μουσική shapes a young soul's disposition by molding its ἔρως, and bringing it "to love in a moderate and musical way what's orderly and beautiful" (403a7-8). To do so, it must subtly charm the young soul and capture its ἔρως with images of beauty, nobility, and order, so as to lead it, without its even being aware, to take pleasure in and praise such things (401b1 ff). Clearly, this task calls for a good deal of skill in "mixing" and "blending" the "colors of the music," especially since, as Socrates notes, the "prudent [φρόνιμον] and quiet character" is not easily imitated (604e2-3). A second, very important point follows directly from Socrates' assertion that the philosophic ruler/craftsman will be guided, at least in part, by what Homer calls god-like and the image of god in human beings: Homer knows and gives voice in his poetry to the proper models for the philosophic ruler/craftsman's educational poems — models drawn from the Ideas as well as human nature. Of course, Socrates may still have reason to censure many other models Homer includes in his broad works. But it is perhaps the divine content of Homer's poems which makes Socrates feel the "friendship for Homer, and reverent shame [αἰδώς] before him" he mentions at the beginning of Book X (595b9-10).[30]

In the cave image Socrates also refers, although less directly, to Homer's knowledge of what is divine in humans and human life. Socrates asks whether the enlightened philosophic soul would envy those who are honored and hold power among the prisoners, or whether he would instead "be affected as Homer says and want very much 'to be a serf to another man, to a portionless man,' and to undergo anything whatsoever rather than to opine those things and live that way" (516d2-7). As we have already seen, this passage compares life outside the cave to real life on earth, and life in the cave to the afterlife in Hades. But this comparison does not exhaust the significance of the passage, for Socrates' question also favorably contrasts Homer and his way of life with the prisoners and their whole way of life, focused as it is on the struggle for honor, prizes, praises, and power. This contrast is clearly implied by Socrates' attribution of the quote to Homer. Socrates could have quoted the *Odyssey* without any reference to its author, or he could have attributed the quote to Achilles. Instead, his reference to what "Homer says" calls our attention to the knowledge Homer in particular possesses. Achilles, the character in the *Odyssey*, can make the distinction between life on earth and the

30. Socrates' inclination at the beginning of Book X to keep silent concerning Homer out of friendship and respect for him recalls his earlier hesitation, "for Homer's sake," to criticize Homer's representation of Achilles for not being holy (391a3-5).

afterlife in Hades only because Homer, the author of the *Odyssey*, knows it. The Achilles Socrates quotes is a dead man who, upon drinking the lamb's blood poured by Odysseus, gains the power to "speak the truth" which the other shades lack.[31] For a while, then, Achilles stands out from the other shades in Hades by speaking intelligently about the difference between life on earth and the afterlife in Hades. Similarly, Homer, who is not a philosopher and so has never left the cave, stands apart from the other cave-dwellers as a man who gives voice to what lies above the cave. He is able to do so, I suggest, because an orienting insight into the divine region outside the cave illuminates for him the difference between the cave and the outer world. Homer's knowledge of the difference between earth and Hades is thus, for Socrates, a poetic image of his prophetic insight. And perhaps — although this is much more speculative — Socrates also intends Achilles' strange intoxication by blood to be in some respects an image of the prophetic inspiration which allows Homer, even though he is within the cave and without direct vision of the earth outside it, somehow to "speak the truth" about that outer region.

We will return later to this image of intoxication. At this point there is good reason to believe that, in spite of his criticisms of Homer, Socrates regards Homer as a prophetic poet, i.e. as one who produces true images of the Ideas as realized in human life without any direct vision of the Ideas. Poets with prophetic souls of this sort are of great importance in the cave. In the absence of a philosophic ruler/craftsman, the best of the wrought images of the Ideas, whose shapes and movements are visible to all of the prisoners via the shadows, are produced by prophetic poets such as Homer.[32]

The significance of the prophetic poet's inspired speech turns upon the importance of the Ideas for human life. The human realm is represented in the cave image as a place apart from, but situated with respect to, an outer world. But were it not for the presence of the outer world within the cave by means of images of the Ideas and the firelight which makes these images visible, the cave would misrepresent the human realm, for humans would be absolutely disconnected from that in respect to which they could

31. *Odyssey* XI, 147-149.

32. Socrates is himself frequently characterized in the *Republic* as a painter or sculptor of images of the καλλίπολις and its philosophical rulers and guardians (see 420e, 472d, 488a, 504d, 540c, 548d). But unlike the prophetic poet, he fashions his images in private and for only a small group of young men. Plato's dialogues are another matter: he probably intends the most superficial level of his portrait of Socrates to be a broadly accessible public image of what is "god-like and the image of god."

be oriented or placed. Without any vision of the Ideas, education, or the improvement of this vision, would be impossible. Socrates thus indicates that the human realm is in place because and to the extent that the Ideas are imaged in it.

According to Socrates, the visibility of the images of the Ideas in the human realm depends upon a divine gift. In the metaphoric terms of the cave image, this visibility is made possible by the illumination provided by the firelight, and Socrates likens fire to the sun and calls the latter an offspring of the Good (517a9-c5). Socrates' veneration of the Good and its offspring is most appropriate: without the visible presence of images of the Ideas in the human realm, we could not distinguish between orientation and disorientation; hence humanity and nobility would be indistinguishable from inhumanity and baseness. In this sense, human life *qua* human points beyond itself to that which is divine, although it is not itself divine. In terms of the image, the life of the πόλις, the specifically human life, takes place in the cave, but the best political life attempts from within the cave to hold the life of the πόλις in place with regard to what lies outside the cave.

The poetry of the prophetic poet is in part animated by the attempt to secure by means of public speech what I have called the locatedness-within-detachment of the human realm within the Whole. In this attempt, the prophetic or divinely inspired poet exhibits the highest kind of political life. But the highest political life is concealed insofar as it appears in the πόλις, because the life of the πόλις cannot be a genuinely educated life. In the cave image, the poet, as one who fashions wrought items, is concealed from the prisoners behind a little wall (τειχίον, 514b4), which would prevent his shadow from being cast against the back of the cave. Self-concealment may reasonably be considered as intrinsic to poetic activity as such, or at the very least to imitative (as opposed to narrative) poetry, in which the poet speaks in the voice of others (393a3-b2). But in the most obvious sense, the highest sort of poet is concealed in his public speech because the many cannot see for themselves the divine basis of his speech. This point is brought out by the philosophic use of poetry. The philosophic ruler/craftsman attempts to make humans "god-like" and "dear to the gods;" in trying to educate humans, he suppresses speech about the Ideas in favor of speech about the god or gods. He must tell noble lies about the gods because the many are incapable of orienting themselves, of being educated to the point where they may see for themselves the measure or measures appropriate to the human soul. Hence they must not be encouraged to judge these measures for themselves, for this would result in the disorientation and debasement of the life of the πόλις. The many, who

lack philosophic natures or prophetic insight, may at best have images of the Ideas "painted onto" their souls. The philosopher who attempts by means of public speech to hold the πόλις in place with respect to the Ideas must conceal the roots of this activity within speeches which attempt to guide the many, but not genuinely to educate them. The philosophic ruler/craftsman is in this respect compelled, for his own safety as well as for the good of the many, to hide behind a τειχίον when he appears in the πόλις.[33]

The speech of the divinely inspired poet also points beyond the human realm in terms accommodated to humans. But the poet's concrete poems transparently display his vision of the measures of human life; he does not *use* poetry as does the philosophic ruler/craftsman, who roots poetic speech in a vision of the Ideas themselves. The prophetic poet sees that which is "god-like and the image of god," but it is the philosopher, not the poet, who is represented as leaving the cave and seeing the divine itself. Socrates' implicit comparison of Homer to Achilles calls to mind his comparison in the *Ion* of the poets to the Bacchae, who become possessed upon drinking milk and honey (534a4-7). Like Achilles, the prophetic poet is an intoxicated resident of the underworld. His peculiar intoxication allows him to utter fundamentally true and clear images without any direct vision of the originals.[34] The metaphor of intoxication appropriately describes the prophetic poet's state, in that he forgets or is concealed from himself. For one thing, he directs or points human life, but cannot clearly see that at which he points. If complete education involves a vision of the measures themselves at which life points, as Socrates suggests, then the prophetic poet, though noble and divinely inspired, is not fully educated. In addition, it is important that the prophetic poet sees himself first and foremost as a poet, i.e. as a maker of images, and not just images of divine or god-like things, but also of "all arts and all things human that have to do with virtue and vice" (598e1-2).[35] As a result, the prophetic poet

33. Cf. 496d6-8, where the philosopher among the many is described as if hiding behind a τειχίον for his own protection. However, in this passage Socrates denies that a philosopher could come to power in any present city, and recommends that the philosopher keep quiet and mind his own business.

34. The poet's intoxication is beautifully expressed by Socrates in the *Ion*: "For a poet is a light and winged and holy thing, and not able to make until he should become inspired and out of his mind, and reason should no longer be in him" (534b3-6).

35. As Griswold notes, "Socrates emphasizes that the imitator concerns himself with making images of the *Whole*; such a person 'makes everything that each one of the manual artisans makes separately" (596c2); he 'produces everything' (598b7) and seems to be 'all wise' (598d3-4)." *Op.*

has from the philosopher's point of view no clear vision of the limits his attempt to maintain the locatedness-within-detachment of the human realm imposes on his poetry. Thus, Socrates' basic criticism of Homer is not that he doesn't provide good models for men, but that the educational effect of his representations of god-like souls is diminished or cancelled by the plethora of worse models his poems contain as a result of his primary attempt to image all things human and divine. In his poems, Homer presents a variety of different and even conflicting models, whose order men are called upon to see for themselves. But poems, like paintings, can't explain their own meaning if it hasn't been grasped, and children — as well as most adults, in Socrates' view — "can't judge what is a hidden sense and what is not" (378d7-8).[36]

V.

We may now express the main conclusions of the last two sections in terms of the metaphor of place, and from the perspective of the problem of securing the place of the human realm with respect to what lies beyond it. As one whose life in a fundamental respect attempts to secure our humanity by mediating the human realm and the divine measures of human life, the divinely inspired poet is "in place" as a true prophet. The sophist, on the other hand, is "out of place" both as a prophet and as an educator. He

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cit., p. 142.

36. The variety of models in Homer's poetry makes it possible for Socrates to criticize Homer for portraying Achilles as overwhelmed with the pain of grief at the death of Patroclus, but to praise Homer's representation of Odysseus' patient endurance of the suitors in his house as an example of "speeches and deeds of endurance by famous men in the face of everything" (388a5-b4, 390d1-5). In general, Socrates seems to esteem Homer's Odysseus but to have a low opinion of his Achilles. Griswold gives evidence that "the defects Socrates finds in the 'tragic poet' Homer are symbolized by Achilles rather than Odysseus" (*op. cit.*, p. 144). In addition, Socrates' representation of Odysseus' soul in the myth of Er implies that Odysseus has, from the perspective of that myth, a philosophic nature. Whereas most of the souls exchange ills and goods in their choice of a new life, Odysseus' soul is able to recover from its love of honor through the memory of its former labors, so that it exchanges a relatively good and just life for a life that will lead it to becoming more just — "the life of a private man who minds his own business" (620c6-7). In carefully reflecting on and learning from the mistakes it made in its former life on earth, and in choosing a moderate and intermediate course of life, Odysseus' soul exemplifies the philosophic nature as Socrates describes it in the myth of Er (618b6 ff.). It is also interesting, as Bloom observes in his interpretive essay at the end of his translation, that Achilles is conspicuously absent from the myth of Er; Bloom concludes "Achilles no longer exists, alive or dead, in the new poetry or the new Socratic world" (*op. cit.*, p. 436).

in effect actively denies that the human realm may in any respect be located within a larger context. In the terms of the cave image, the sophist falsely imitates the poet by mediating, not the cave and the outer world, but the prisoners and the level where men manipulate the wrought items. In these same terms, the sophist also falsely imitates the philosopher's education, or ascent from and return to the cave, in his own journey up to the wrought items and back down to the prisoners.

Like the prophetic poet, the philosopher is also concerned with the problem of securing the place of the human realm within the Whole. But unlike the prophetic poet, who never leaves the interior of the cave, the philosopher is not fundamentally "in place" within the confines of the human realm, or, in particular, in the public life of the πόλις. Instead, his comprehensive ἔρως leads him to work out the problem of place in a unique way. As we will see directly, the cave image suggests that the philosopher desires to lead a whole human life, and so is concerned with doing and making as well as knowing, with speaking and acting in the arena of human life as well as philosophic contemplation. And while as a result the philosopher is properly "in place" in neither of the regions represented by the interior and the exterior of the cave, his life in a way encompasses these regions and places them together. The cave image also suggests that the philosopher's vision of the Good may help to guide him in attempting to hold all of his life's dimensions together and to secure its wholeness. But because of the intrinsic "darkness" of the human realm, the philosopher's vision of the Good and the Ideas (even if we follow the image's explicit suggestion that it is a completely lucid one, which is highly doubtful) is not the same as a clear vision of the Whole, or of the wholeness of his own life. While the philosopher's comprehensive ἔρως causes him to return to the cave, the intrinsic ἀφροσύνη and erotic malleability of ordinary human life require that the philosopher complete his education by studying the orientation and movement of that life.

In the cave image, the philosopher's love of wisdom leads him to the exterior of the cave, where the lucidity of his intellectual vision is compared to the clarity of the perceptual vision of objects in direct sunlight. While the prophetic poet views the Whole from the interior of the human realm and from the partial perspective of the significance of the Whole for human life, the philosopher, insofar as he stands outside the cave, views the Whole from a perspective exterior to human life. From that equally partial perspective, the philosopher sees the Ideas themselves, not their images, and is engaged only in contemplating the order and nature of the Whole, and not in any of the practical or productive activ-

ities characteristic of human life. But the exterior of the cave is not the philosopher's proper place, just as the Ideas are not the whole of the Whole. The philosophic soul inclines toward and is fashioned by the human realm as well as the divine, as is evident in his initial desire to flee back to the shadows and his later return to the cave. Just as the philosopher leaves the cave by nature, we may infer that he returns to it by nature, for in presenting the cave image Socrates does not say that he is compelled to re-enter the cave. (He does indicate later that the philosopher must be compelled to return to the cave in order to rule [519d1 ff.], which suggests that a private life suits the philosopher's comprehensive desire in a way that a public life of political rule — even if it were possible for him — could not.) The philosopher's voluntary return to the cave after he views the Good and the Ideas suggests that he is in the first place a human being, whose love of wisdom is not detached from his humanity but is rather the highest manifestation of his desire for a whole human life. This view of the philosopher's ἔρως is quite different from the one put forth by Socrates earlier in Book VI, but is supported by his discussion of the Good, which we will consider very shortly.[37] Still, the poet's place is also not the proper place for the philosopher, who as a lover of learning (φιλομαθής) loves the Ideas (490a8 ff.). Neither the interior nor the exterior of the cave alone is the proper place for a philosophic human.[38]

Philosophic contemplation and human life are each only parts of the Whole. The philosopher does not take his place within either of these parts; rather, his life itself places these parts together in an

37. In Book VI, Socrates states that the philosopher's ἔρως is for "the nature of each thing itself that is," i.e. the Ideas (490b3). The philosopher as Socrates portrays him here prefers as a lover to be always with his beloved, i.e. engaged in pure νόησις, the intellectual intuition of the Ideas (cf. 500b8-9: "for the one who has his διάνοια most truly turned toward the things that are there is no leisure to look down. . ."). One consequence of his ἔρως is that he "imitates and as much as possible makes himself like" the Ideas (500c5), which means that he also suppresses as much as possible that in himself which is other than and different from the Ideas. While he cannot dispense with νόησις, he would attempt to suppress all of his speeches and actions in the arena of human life and the desires and perceptions from which these spring, and so to annihilate his distinctively human existence. Socrates' subsequent presentation of the Good as an ἀρχή of the living, ordered Whole indicates that this earlier sketch of the philosopher, which shows his ἔρως entirely focused on a non-living part of the Whole, ironically presents an immoderate and degenerate caricature of the balanced ἔρως and living wholeness of the philosophic soul oriented by the Good.

38. This point is made in another way in Book VI, when Socrates, in describing the situation of the philosopher among the many, compares him to a "human being" ἄνθρωπος among wild beasts (496d2).

important way. Although the Ideas by which the philosopher orients his life are already present and not produced by humans, the comprehensive activity of placing together philosophic contemplation and human life in a philosophic life produces and contributes to the Whole a living wholeness.

Socrates suggests that the philosopher may be guided in his life by the Good, to which his life is akin as a bond for the Whole. The philosopher is able to "know and live truly" as a result of his intercourse with the Ideas only because that intercourse culminates in an indirect vision of the Good, which is the source of, and is itself displayed in, the unity of the Whole as a living and intelligible entity. Socrates calls the Good "the beginning [ἀρχήν] of the all" (511b7). When the philosophic soul leaves the cave, he comes to see the Good as the source of the intelligibility of the Whole (516b9-c2). But Socrates repeatedly speaks of the Good as giving birth to its image, the sun, which is responsible for the generation and growth of visible things and so is itself an ἀρχή of life (506e3-4, 508b12-13, 517c3). The Whole includes soul, and so is both intelligible and living. While the soul and the Ideas are distinct, they are somehow united in a life in full bloom. Taken by themselves, the Ideas cannot display this unity to a soul. For this the soul needs a vision not of the Ideas alone, but of the Good, which shows forth the unity of form and soul, or the wholeness of the Whole. More specifically, while the philosopher cannot view the Good directly (just as one would be blinded by the sun), he may have an indirect intellectual vision of the Good in the visibility of the connection of the soul and the Ideas in a living, ordered whole. The philosopher's ascent to the exterior of the cave, where he sees living things and infers that the sun is the source of "the seasons and the years" which order their growth (516b9-10), indicates the possibility of such a vision of the Good.

Because the connection between the soul and the Ideas is a living one and not an Idea, metaphoric, poetic language is more appropriate than formal, analytic language in talking about the Good: only poetic or metaphoric λόγος can convey the dimension of living. But it is important to note that Plato also calls attention to the dimension of concealment implicit in his use of imagistic language. Socrates is willing to speak only about "what looks like a child of the Good," and warns us to "be careful that I don't in some way unwillingly deceive you. . ." (506e2-3, 507a4-5). In his speech about the Good, he presents three images — the sun, the divided line, and the cave — whose relations to one another are not clarified. Furthermore, Socrates uses the verb "μαντεύεσθαι" ("to divine") to describe the soul's access in general, and his own access in particular, to the Good, and the word

is emphasized when Glaucon immediately repeats it (505d11-e1, 506a6-7, a8). These points concern us here because they seem to hint, to the contrary of what the cave image suggests, that the philosopher's vision of the Good may in some ways be blurred. Socrates' mention of divination helps us to see one crucial respect in which this is the case, for divination lacks the luminous certainty, comparable to the certainty of one's perceptual vision of objects in direct sunlight, which Socrates' image attributes to the philosopher's intellectual vision of the intelligible realm. A reappraisal of Socrates' speech reveals that the philosopher's vision of the Good possesses an ineradicable dimension of uncertainty. Though the philosopher may divine along with Socrates that education is possible, he cannot know in advance that the turning of his soul has been completed. In the terms of the cave image, that turning has been completed if he "sees" in the full "light" of the Good. But the philosopher has only his own vision to judge the light in which he sees, and the power of his vision to discern good depends upon just this light. By analogy, the vision of a man who is in the dark, and who (like the prisoners in the cave) knows no other state, is "useless and harmful" (519a1), hence useless in judging the quality of the light in virtue of which he is able to see. ("Good" in this context of course means good ends or good purposes, and in the broadest sense a good life; vision can adjust itself to different degrees of light, so that its power as an instrument to achieve one's ends remains always the same — cf. 518e3-4). Since the philosopher cannot "step outside" of his own vision, he cannot know with clarity and certainty that it is no longer distorted by its initial habituation to the shadows in the cave. Still, there is no good reason to suppose Socrates means to imply that education, or the improvement of vision, is impossible; however, he clearly means to indicate that the philosopher cannot afford to be dogmatic. Like Socrates, the philosopher must always be ready to look at things πάλιν ἐξ ἀρχῆς, in order to check again whether he is seeing them in the right light.

The cave image also indicates that the philosopher's vision of the Ideas and the Good cannot fully illuminate the Whole for him, because it cannot fully illuminate the human realm. When the philosopher who stands outside the cave sees the human beings there, he perhaps sees how humans would live if they could see in the full light of the Good. But humans see only in partial light, and only part of what the Good lights up. The interior of the cave is detached from the exterior, and the nature of that detachment is not itself illuminated by the philosopher's vision of the exterior of the cave. This detachment and its obscurity are emphasized by Socrates' mention of the philosopher's "sudden" entrance into

the cave, and the long time needed for his eyes to adjust to the darkness there (516e5, 517a1-2). Furthermore, as the phenomenon of sophistry makes clear, the detachment of the human realm from the Ideas and the Good alters in not entirely predictable ways, and so cannot be understood once and for all. The philosopher is thus at first "in the dark" because he has not yet grasped the detachment of the human realm in its current nature, i.e. the current nature of the shifting erotic and intellectual disorientation manifested there. Hence, in order to act intelligently (ἐμφρόνως) in the human realm, the philosopher must not only see the Good (517c4-5), but is then also obliged to sit down with the spectators of the shadows in the cave and study the concrete life of his fellow citizens (516e4, e8-9).[39]

Because of the intrinsic blurriness of the relation of the human realm to the Ideas and the Good, the philosopher, who in leading a whole life attempts to hold these realms together, cannot grasp the wholeness of his life once and for all in a single act of intellectual vision. Instead, he must be guided through the course of his life by his φρόνησις, the eye of the soul which is made "useful and helpful" by the Good and thus brings its illuminative power into the cave (518d9 ff.).[40] Of course, the cave image's references to the Good and φρόνησις merely set forth the problem of place in its basic terms. In indicating that the Whole within which an educated life takes place is in a way held together as a living Whole and so placed by the most comprehensive and most educated life, the cave image points toward the genuinely philosophic life as the "solution" to the problem of place. Like the dialogues themselves, the image merely points, because the problem of place is resolved not by any kind of speech, but by a life.

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39. Such study would, in part, furnish the philosopher with means of self-defense. As 517a2-6 shows, the philosopher must guard against being charged with corrupting the πόλις (i.e., being charged with sophistry) and consequently suffering violence at the hands of the many. Hence, the skills of self-concealment and calming the many, which the sophist acquires by observing human life, would be of no little use to the philosopher.

40. At 508b3-4, Socrates calls the eye "the most sunlike of the organs of sense."